

December 2, 2019

Dear FPC Commissioners & Common Council Members:

I have been a dedicated public servant who has served the citizens of the City and the County of Milwaukee for the past forty years. Eleven years ago, after retiring as a Detective from the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office, I was hired as the first Investigator for the Fire and Police Commission (FPC) after its reorganization was prompted by the 2006 Police Accountability Resource Center (PARC) report. I've been proud and appreciative that I was entrusted with this tremendous responsibility. During my tenure at the FPC I have taken my duties as an independent and transparent fact finder with the seriousness it deserves. My job performance and contributions have always been motivated by my keen awareness of transparency, knowing that my work product could be the subject of scrutiny by citizens, accused individuals, and members of the media. My goal was to investigate citizen complaints in a thorough, unbiased, fair, and transparent manner so as to reflect the FPC as a public safety oversight agency with integrity at its core.

It is with regret that I hereby submit my resignation. This action is being taken in protest against the current FPC administrative management whose newly implemented practices and procedures are undermining the fundamental spirit and purpose of the City of Milwaukee's civilian public oversight system.

During the past three years the FPC has seen dramatic internal changes, including periods of time with no Executive Director and the eventual turnover of three Executive Directors and three Board Chairs. FPC staff members were impacted by an array of changes in daily operations, job functions and divergent leadership styles. As the saying goes, the only constant has been change. During this tumultuous time, I've been proud to work in a collaborative manner with my co-workers, forging toward the common goal to continue to serve the public while upholding the FPC's service standards and reputation. I have also valued the Investigator's mutual trust and collaborative partnership with prior FPC Executive Directors, specifically when drafting improvements to the citizen complaint process based on the needs of the public and interested parties. The FPC Investigator role is an Exempt employee position that was designated as such due to the confidentiality and professionalism required. As such, I was respected and appreciated for my content knowledge and experience in the field of police oversight investigations. As changes to citizen complaint procedures were made, they were team decisions, leveraged by collective expertise, and aimed at maintaining the FPC's independence and its responsibility to objectively monitor and evaluate the operations of the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) and the Milwaukee Fire Department (MFD).

Unfortunately, under the new FPC management team this seems to no longer be the case. New citizen complaint procedures and re-allocation of duties are delaying efficient services to citizens and are also distorting the vital role of an Investigator as an independent and unbiased fact finder. My expression of professional concern, born out of decades of investigatory experience, have either been marginalized or completely ignored. This has been extremely frustrating as the newly hired FPC management team and investigative staff driving the current changes have experience in this field measured in months not years, particularly as it relates to investigations.

What is even more disconcerting is without substantive input being sought from those of us who have solid knowledge and experience in citizen oversight investigations, these individuals, don't know what they don't know. Under new management, change can always be expected, but one would expect an inexperienced management team to be open to becoming educated about why current procedures were instituted and are in place based on previous historical reasons, rather than making changes that appear to lack logic and may negatively impact the public. Throughout my long tenure, over the course of many leadership changes, an educational and respectfully deliberative process had occurred, but this team has not adopted that approach.

The newly appointed Executive Director has restructured the FPC organizational chart so that she no longer directly supervises the Investigators and instead has delegated their supervision to a manager who has no prior supervisory or public safety oversight investigation experience. The Investigators no longer have a close working relationship with the Director to discuss the complexities of citizen complaints and their impact on interested stakeholders. Further, under this new structure, the new Executive Director no longer reviews citizen complaint case files but instead only blindly signs disposition letters to complainants which are written by the Investigators. The Executive Director appears to have intentionally chosen to withdraw and take a hands off approach to her statutory obligations (City Charter 314 and FPC Citizen Complaint Filing Guidelines) to review, assess, and evaluate the internal operations of the FPC citizen complaint process as well as the auditing of the MPD and MFD citizen complaint process. This shift in accountability and demonstrable lack of intellectual inquisitiveness or insight into the citizen complaint process by the current Executive Director is stunning. The Executive Director has an obligation to actively participate in the citizen complaint process, as detailed in the FPC rules which repeatedly reference the FPC Citizen Complaint Filing Guidelines. It is as if every statutorily mandated duty and function of the Executive Director is being outsourced to others in the organization, making one wonder why taxpayers are paying almost \$140,000 per year for an Executive Director. Prior Executive Directors took their responsibilities seriously and realized that their guidance, input, and analysis of systematic problems stemming from citizen complaints provided needed improvements to the process as well as identified potential legal exposure to the MPD, MFD, and the City. Speaking of legal exposure, this management team has also notably failed to implement strategies to perform mandated audits of MPD duties as identified within the ACLU lawsuit agreement.

Another impact from the inexperience of this management team is the effect their decisions are having on the vital role of independence during oversight functions. Recently, FPC management has asked MPD Internal Affairs staff (rather than an outside, independent resource or department) to train newly hired inexperienced FPC Investigators. As an oversight body, it is one thing to observe MPD Internal Affairs practices and procedures; it is quite another to ask them to train the staff who will be expected to oversee them. The adage, "fox guarding the henhouse" comes to mind. That this decision could impact public perceptions about the core value of unbiased oversight from the FPC, seems to not be a priority for the current FPC management team. Other examples of the new management team's reliance on MPD experience have come into play when the new Investigators have completed citizen complaints, and have been confronted with rule violations that require disciplinary or corrective action responses. Because new staff does not have the experience that could guide them through these more complex situations, the management team has chosen to bypass the FPC protocols in place, and instead,

requested that MPD handle them internally. Is this indicative of the direction the new Executive Director will be taking for the FPC; asking an agency it oversees to train its oversight staff and asking the same agency to deal with discipline originating from FPC citizen complaints that should instead be handled by the Executive Director or FPC Commissioners?

Newly implemented citizen complaint procedures and Investigator duties related to community outreach have further served to distort the role of Investigators into community relations representatives. My expressed concerns that this decision could create an appearance of impropriety and could potentially compromise the integrity of the citizen complaint process, were dismissed by the management team with no thoughtful discussion or reflection. I expressed my concerns, based on my prior experience, by stating that educating the community about the FPC complaint process is critical to ensuring the process is accessible to all, however, engaging in community outreach should be the function of outreach staff, not Investigators. Investigators are supposed to be independent, impartial, and fair individuals who should not be the face of the complaint process. As such, we must maintain some professional distance from the agencies whose members we investigate as well as from the community members whose complaints we are asked to review. Throughout my career I have learned that Investigators should be independent fact finders who show no partisanship to either accused parties or citizens alleging misdeeds. Therefore, sending investigators out into the community to do outreach, which involves building relationships and doing community education could have long-reaching impact on perceptions of bias. I instead proposed that the Investigators make ourselves available and accessible to our Community Partners who could act as a liaison with their community members and support our outreach efforts. This would have established trusting relationships with the Community Based Organizations who serve the community without losing the perception of objectivity.

In conclusion, more than anything, I am deeply disturbed by the new management's treatment of staff; which seems to be rooted in mistrust and suspicion. The Executive Director, upon arriving at FPC, eventually met with staff for one on one meetings but seemed to have already developed rumor-fueled preconceived ideas about staff members and inaccurate perceptions of FPC functions. Subsequent staff meetings have been one-way communication interactions with the perception and eventual reality that if an employee expresses conflicting viewpoints, stern consequences will follow. This distrust and suspicion can be shown by recent directives such as no cell phones would be allowed during staff meetings, and that FPC staff are no longer allowed to engage with Commissioners' requests for information regarding FPC business, and when Commissioners arrive at FPC offices they are only to engage with and be escorted by management. To a team of experienced professionals, this approach has been nothing short of unprofessional. Recently when a long tenured employee attempted to address concerns such as this with the Executive Director, she responded by telling the employee if they didn't like it, they could leave the FPC. What is most unfortunate for the citizens of Milwaukee is that a number of experienced, professional staff members appear to have taken the Executive Director's ill-advised suggestion. Since the Executive Director's appointment approximately three months ago, a staff of thirteen employees (which was already down from the full complement of 21) has seen the following turnover: the Operations Manager resigned in protest, two employees have taken FMLA leave for stress, two staff members have resigned and three staff members have been fired. This workplace changed from a collaborative, knowledgeable and seasoned team of public

servants to a hostile, toxic, and retaliatory place guided by inexperience, ignorance and indifference. Instead of encouraging an intellectually engaged team of professionals collaboratively working toward the common goal of performing the functions of the FPC, this management team is treating staff as inconsequential robots who must blindly follow directives in complete compliance, without input, or be dismissed. This type of authoritative leadership and callous approach to staff turnover has not only impacted staff morale in a negative manner, but it has also negatively impacted the FPC as an organization. I am concerned about the quality of service the FPC will provide in the future to citizens, as decades of institutionalized knowledge and dedication are eliminated by this management's decisions to hollow out the department from the inside.

For all the reasons stated above, it is time to end my service to the City of Milwaukee. As much as I have loved my work, the current management team has in a very short period of time demonstrated a frightening ignorance of FPC operations, shown no apparent knowledge of industry norms for public safety oversight investigations, and worse, fostered an environment of mistrust and cronyism, rather than trying to build a strong independent team. A workplace that had been one in which staff were unified in the mission of effective, fair, and transparent civilian oversight of Milwaukee's public safety departments, under the direction of the Board, has now devolved into a divisive, secretive and uncomfortable environment. I cannot in good conscience continue to work under this leadership; to do so would be in conflict with my convictions, my values, and my ethics regarding the true job duties of a dedicated public safety oversight professional. As such, I resign.

Sincerely,
Cheryl Patane'